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ABSTRACT

According to Houle's 1961 typology, adult learners may be classified as being primarily goal-oriented, activity-oriented, or learning-oriented learners. Since 1961, society has moved from an industrial age to a post-technological era of information and service. In view of the extensive social changes that have occurred since 1961, Houle's typology was reviewed to determine whether it still remains valid in today's social context. In 1983, Boshier and Collins used a "tree" approach to test the veracity of Houle's typology with a large database representing many adults, programs, and instructional settings. They determined that the goal and learning orientations described by Houle were reasonably clear but that activity-orientation is actually much more complex than Houle envisaged and is instead a forced aggregate of social stimulation, social contact, external expectations, and community service items. These findings, coupled with other literature on motivational research, indicate that although Houle's typology was indeed the stepping stone for motivational orientation research, the vast unforeseen changes that have taken place in society since its development demand that the typology's relevance to today's motivational orientations of adult education participants be questioned. (Contains 12 references.) (MN)

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HOULE'S TYPOLOGY: TIME FOR RECONSIDERATION

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a review of the role of Cyril O. Houle in developing a tripartite typology for motivational research. The primary question addressed in this article was the validity and utility of Houle's typology, in light of societal changes since its inception. A description is given of Houle's typology and Boshier's Theory in reference to the orientations of adult education participants. The author contend that Cyril O. Houle is the founding father of motivational research in adult education. However, Roger W. Boshier established the phenomenological reality that exists within adult education participants.

HOULE'S TYPOLOGY: TIME FOR RECONSIDERATION

Much of motivational research current structure and substance can be traced to the thinking and leadership of Cyril O. Houle during the last thirty-three years. Houle's typology have become the cornerstone of motivational research.

During the development of Houle's typology, there were those who opposed his vision for motivational research. His most notable opponent was Roger Boshier, to whom many adult educators attribute most of the current research pertaining to motivational orientations of adult education participants.

It is over three decades since Houle's typology was developed, we have moved from the age of industry into what Toffler (1980) calls the third wave -- the post-technological era of information and service. As adult education changes to fulfill new roles created by social changes, Houle's typology should be reevaluated.

The desire to design programs congruent with learner needs and interests accounts for the persistent interest in reasons, or motivational orientations, that impel people to participate in adult education (Boshier & Collins, 1983a). Early adult educators such as Lindeman (1926) were cognizant of the need to tailor programs to adult needs. Modern educators such as Knowles (1980) agree with their forebearers.

The primary question addressed by this article is the

validity and utility of Houle's typology, in light of societal changes since its inception.

Following World War II, learner-centeredness was assisted by the work of psychologists like Havighurst (1953) who spoke of developmental tasks and dominant concerns that motivate a person to learn during various stages of the life cycle. Exhortations for self-actualization (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1951), coupled with psychologies that highlighted the importance of group functioning (Lewin, 1935), gave impetus to the group dynamics movement and the associated preoccupation within the learner.

HOULE'S TYPOLOGY

Houle (1961) developed a typology that described the orientations of adult education participants. Houle (1961) audiotaped interviews with 22 continuing education participants in the Chicago area. Houle decided that the 22 participants could be classified into three types:

1. **goal-oriented learners**
2. **activity-oriented learners**
3. **learning-oriented learners**

Goal-Oriented - Houle defined this group as those who use education as a means of accomplishing fairly clear-cut objectives.

Of these groups, the goal-oriented are the easiest to understand, chiefly because their views accord so well with the

usual beliefs about education. The education of these people, Houle suggests, is in episodes, each of which begins with the realization of a need or the identification of an interest. There is no even, steady, continuous flow to the learning of such people, although it is an ever recurring characteristic of their lives. Nor do they restrict their activities to any one institution or method of learning. The need or interest appears and they satisfy it by taking a course, joining a group, reading a book or going on a trip. (The awareness of the need or interest is sometimes aroused because a learning resource becomes available). These people, Houle (1961) suggests, read a great deal, not freely or widely but always along lines of well-defined interests or in connection with courses or organizational work.

Activity-Oriented - They take part in learning primarily for reasons unrelated to the purposes or content of the activity in which they engage. All of the activity-oriented in Houle's (1961) sample were course takers and group-learners. They might stay within a single institution or they might go to a number of different places but it was **social contact** that they sought and their selection of an activity was essentially based on the amount and kind of human relationships it would yield. These people, Houle says, do almost no reading.

Learning-Oriented - According to Houle (1961), this sub-group

differs from the other two much more markedly than either of them does from the other. Each particular educational experience of the learning oriented is an activity with a goal, but the continuity and range of such experiences make the total pattern of participation far more than the sum of its parts. The learning oriented, Houle says, have a continuity, a flow and a spread which establish the basic nature of the participation in continuing or adult education. They are avid readers (and have been since childhood); they join groups and classes for educational reasons; they select the serious programs on television and radio.

Houle (1961) said these were not pure types; the best way to represent them pictorially would be as three circles overlapping at the edges. But the central emphasis of each type was clear.

Houle (1969) has suggested that there is another group who have what might be called a **universal approach to learning**. Learning is so interwoven in the very fabric of their being that they have never really partialled it out for conscious attention. Their life is made up of learning and they almost regard it as demeaning to think about education as something separate from the whole texture of their being.

BOSHIER'S THEORY VERSUS HOULE'S TYPOLOGY

According to Boshier and Collins (1983b), Houle's typology was parsimonious and commanded so much attention it seemed logical

to investigate how well it summarized the motivational orientations of participants. The purpose of Boshier and Collins (1983b) study was to test the veracity of Houle's typology with a large data base representing many adults, many programs, and many instructional settings.

Using the "tree", Boshier and Collins selected a solution containing anywhere from 1 to 40 items. A three-cluster solution loosely isomorphic with Houle's typology was discernible. Cluster 1 consisted of the Cognitive Interest items and was congruent with Houle's learning orientation. Cluster II was bounded by items 2 and 35 and, in some respects, resembled the activity orientation. Cluster III, at the foot of the "tree", was bounded by to "seek professional advancement" (item 3) and to "acquire knowledge to help with other courses" (item 13) and most closely resembled Houle's goal-orientation.

Boshier and Collins (1983b) indicated that the goal and learning orientations were reasonably clear as Houle had described them, but the activity-orientation was much more complex than Houle had envisaged; a forced aggregate of Social Stimulation, Social Contact, External Expectations, and Community Service items.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

After reviewing the literature on motivational orientation

research it is important to recognize that Houle's typology was the stepping-stone for motivational orientation research.

From my prospective, Houle is the founding father for motivational orientation research/theory. However, indepth studies and sound theory testing by Boshier established the phenomenological reality that exists within participants themselves. Prior to studies by Boshier, Houle's typology was largely an untested framework purporting to describe participant orientations.

In the ensuing decades, America has changed from a labor intensive, assemblyline, industrial society to an information intensive, automated service oriented society. The quality of life not only at home but also at the workplace has a higher priority than ever before. This is supported by a recent study by Gordon (1993) which indicated that more women than men were motivated to enroll in adult and vocational education credit courses for "Professional Advancement" and "Cognitive Interest" reasons. Gordon (1993), along with other researchers concluded that this could be attributed to futurists' predictions about the changing make-up of the labor force, which indicate that more women will be working full time in a wider range of occupations in the year 2000.

Given the vast unforseen changes that have taken place in

America over the past decade, Houle's typology relevancy to today's motivational orientations of adult education participants must be questioned. Adult education has a central part to play in the American education system in propelling this nation and its people into a bright future. It is time, however, that the profession examined its underpinnings with an eye to that future rather than to the past.

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